

**A Proposal for Expanding Multilingual  
Community Engagement in the Town of  
Randolph, MA**

**METROBRIDGE**



## About this Report

This report is a product of student work in Boston University's Cross-Cultural Psychology course taught by Prof. Catherine Caldwell-Harris in Fall 2019.

## Acknowledgments

The MetroBridge program at Boston University's Initiative on Cities wishes to thank our partners in the Town of Randolph, especially Town Planner Michelle Tyler, for their collaboration and support on this project.

## About BU MetroBridge

MetroBridge empowers students across Boston University to tackle urban issues, and at the same time, helps city leaders confront key challenges. MetroBridge connects with local governments to understand their priorities, and then collaborates with Boston University faculty to translate each city's unique needs into course projects. Students in undergraduate and graduate classes engage in city projects as class assignments while working directly with local government leaders during the semester. The goal of MetroBridge is to mutually benefit both the Boston University community and local governments by expanding access to experiential learning and by providing tailored support to under-resourced cities. MetroBridge is funded by the College of Arts and Sciences and housed at Boston University's Initiative on Cities.



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## Executive Summary

The Town of Randolph has become increasingly diverse, with a high proportion of multicultural families moving in and becoming permanent residents. Over thirty different languages are spoken in the Town of Randolph, and of those languages, many residents are not literate in their native language. The government prides itself on the town's diversity, and understands the importance of providing information in a timely way that engages all residents who are from different cultures and linguistic backgrounds. Recently, residents have noted issues with a lack of appropriate communication between the town and its citizens on important matters such as public health announcements, infrastructure projects, and election season. This lack of communication can lead to disgruntled citizens, and may even lead to harm if important warnings are not communicated. Resolving the communication barrier with Randolph's diverse population is an issue that the town's leadership seeks to address and solve in an efficient manner.

In order to develop a solution to this problem, the MetroBridge team first brainstormed ways to address the lack of communication. Once input from classmates was shared, the team decided that the establishment of an internship program would be most effective to improve city-wide communication. The MetroBridge team studied other cities and towns with similar programs in order to understand how to best create and maintain this type of program. This research included cities and towns such as Newton, Chelmsford, and Boston. An internship program run by the City of Boston's Office of Language and Communications Access closely resembled what the MetroBridge team envisioned for Randolph.

The internship program for high school students has the potential to close the gaps in ineffective communication between the government and the town's multicultural constituents. The program will allow students to apply their own skills and interests to conduct creative problem-solving, to run during free periods or after school. A unique part of this program will be a lasting relationship with Boston University. Undergraduate students will volunteer and serve as mentors to the high schoolers in order to alleviate the workload of Town of Randolph employees who will have to undertake the development and maintenance of this program. This partnership will be mutually beneficial to both the high school interns who are able to gain experience working for their town's government, and for college volunteers who can gain important professional skills such as communication, leadership, and time- and project-management.

This program will be measured and evaluated by a system which tracks and quantifies complaints from residents related to this problem. Success will be measured by a decrease in the number of resident complaints. Additionally, the completion of a library of resources that can be edited and translated for a particular public service announcement will also mark success. Furthermore, the MetroBridge team recommends a two-way evaluation to be implemented, where the high school intern evaluates the BU mentor as well as having the BU mentor evaluate the high school intern.

## Introduction and Challenge

In early Fall of 2019, Boston University's MetroBridge program, which connects Boston University and municipalities in Massachusetts to help improve their communities, was approached by the Town of Randolph for potential partnership.

The Town of Randolph has seen an influx of residents with proximity to major transportation networks, and now represents one of more multicultural communities with a high proportion of multicultural families. The town prides itself in their flourishing number of diverse populations, but the town government strives to provide important information in a timely manner and engage residents who are from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Recently, there have been complaints from residents in terms of boiling water problems or road work, and the town government seeks support in developing effective ways for flexible communication with the residents.

Due to the characteristics of the problem Randolph was facing, the project was chosen by Cross-Cultural Psychology class (PS560), led by Professor Catherine Caldwell-Harris. Students participated in a group project, to identify the cross-cultural aspects of the problem, understand the functions of local government and come up with ideas that can provide with appropriate resources. We as a group took steps of brainstorming initial ideas, communication with town representatives and the visit to Randolph for further insight, which helped outlining the proposal and looking at its plausibility. The lack of multilingual staff at the town government to resolve any miscommunication with the people of Randolph highlights the urgency of the matter to develop proper solutions, which in part, may also be a guide for other towns that are facing similar problems in a multicultural environment.

As for the final decision, we propose an internship program run by town of Randolph with Randolph High School, which we will go over in depth in the later paragraphs.

## Research and Methodology

As part of the search for a solution to Randolph's cross-cultural challenge, our group examined different possible solutions as seen in other towns. We began with a full-class brainstorm, wherein our classmates who were not involved in the project shared their perspectives and ideas based on their personal and professional experiences. Once the decision was made that we wanted to create an internship program, we began to look at other programs to gain insight into how a high school internship might be created. Specifically, we were interested in the methods different towns in Massachusetts were using to run similar programs in their town halls.

The first example we studied is a program run out of Newton, MA. The Summer High School Internship Program allows high schoolers the opportunity to experience working in local businesses and government. This summer program pairs students with local community members who serve as mentors. Additionally, the city then places students with a local organization or a department within City Hall to work as an intern. The town provides professional development opportunities throughout the summer. This program stood out to us because it provides youth the opportunity to experience industries that interest them while also gaining the benefits of a mentoring relationship.

A similar program is currently being run year-round in Chelmsford, MA, and enlists both high schoolers and undergraduate students. This one is run solely through the Town Hall, and invites

students to use their skills and interests to work on several projects tailored to their interests. This program was of particular interest because many of the tasks performed by the interns are directed by their interests and/or area of study. This means that they often have more experience in a

particular skill than professional town hall staff may have. Furthermore, a student working on a project they are passionate about means that they are more motivated to create a successful end result.

The city of Boston also engages students for internship program at the city government. Working with multiple sectors such as Law, Food Access, Fair Housing and Equity, Innovation and Technology, New Urban Mechanics, Language Access and Communication Access, students can utilize their abilities to improve city functions and understand governmental duties. Internships from the Mayor's Office of Language and Communications Access, closely relates to what Randolph is trying to reach, in that government seeks to build a system that provides interpretation, translation and other assistive technology as an outreach effort to all multilingual citizens that reside in the city of Boston.

With the knowledge of these various programs, we now present the proposed design for the Randolph internship program.

## Proposal

Considering everything that we have learned from other town programs, and taking into account the needs of the Town of Randolph, we propose an internship program for high school students. Currently, more than 30 languages are spoken in the town of Randolph, and of those languages, many of the residents are not literate in their native language. This has caused challenges with communication on important town matters such as boil water orders, road work, election season notifications, and many others. This internship would help the town of Randolph effectively communicate with residents by preparing student interns to respond in times of need. This internship will allow the town to enlist their own residents to solve the problems of the town as they arise. The students will be able to use their own skills and interests to conduct creative problem-solving. The internship can be completed during free periods or immediately after school. The close proximity of the high school and town hall make Randolph an ideal candidate for such a program.

For the sake of this proposal, we will not identify a specific name for this program, as it may change as it develops in the coming months. As more stakeholders become invested in the outcomes of this program, they may have a desire to create a name that reflects their interests for this program. However, we would like to offer a few of our ideas for potential monikers. We considered: In My Backyard Internship, BU-Randolph Internship, Town Hall and BU Internship, and MetroBridge Randolph Internship.

One unique aspect of the internship will be a partnership with Boston University. University students will apply on a volunteer basis to serve as mentors to the high schoolers. The mentors will primarily serve to provide supervision to the interns. Through weekly phone calls, the mentors will check in on the progress of various projects that the interns are creating, as well as plan for the tasks to be accomplished the following week. These mentors will serve as a source of accountability that may otherwise be taxing on the town hall staff. Additionally, they will serve as a sounding board and point of reference for the interns' ideas. The perspectives that the mentors bring will encourage the interns to use their creativity to its fullest extent. Additionally, the mentors can help advise on workplace etiquette, such as proper dress and email formatting.

Working within the framework of such an internship, we wanted to consider how the interns might respond to an incident in the town. For example, a boil-water advisory is a public health advisory that alerts residents about contaminated drinking water. Cases are often rare; however, they require immediate attention to protect residents from getting sick. With that said, informing the community must be done in a timely, effective manner. This partnership would require students to be flexible

and reliable so that they can respond to one-time situations like a boil water order. It would also require responsive BU students to respond through FaceTime, text, or a phone call to offer their perspective if advice is needed or desired. Whether students decide to prepare an iconographic flyer or act out procedures in a quick video, the internship would help the town of Randolph transmit this important information to all their residents. See Table 2 for a sample flyer for a boil-water notice.

Beyond assisting with the logistical aspect of the internship, the mentors will serve an additional function as role models for the college application process. Members of the Randolph High School community have expressed concerns about the difficulty of getting information about the college application process. A college student for a mentor will provide the Randolph High School students with an opportunity to discuss the college and/or career discernment process with an experienced peer.

An additional dimension of this potential partnership could be the benefit that it would provide for the entire high school image. Randolph High School is currently on their fourth principal in four years, and last year they were close to a state takeover. They have expressed interest in a partnership with a large research university as one means of gaining a larger reputation.

As for rigorous participation of Boston University in this partnership with Town of Randolph, we hope to make this internship program beneficial for BU students as well. A possible plan would be the takeover of the program from various departments, and making the internship program as a formal two-credit course in each department, to inform of the program to many students, and engage as many interested students as possible.

Through the teamwork of mentoring Randolph high school students, BU students will gain communication and leadership skills as well as time management, and the process of supervision of projects will give insights about problem-solving, and other transferable skills that could be used in any fields of work.

In light of the groundings of the problems the town faces, that a large population speak languages other than English, the engaged parties, both from Randolph High School and Boston University would hopefully be students with diverse language backgrounds, so additional language exchanges are also expected.

The recruitment is expected to be from international relations, education, public policy, and many language departments, but for other BU students interested in getting experiences with schools and local governments, and seek training in public policy or social work, this internship program will be a good fit for having actual experiences outside the classroom and write up on their resumes for their future career.

## Key Players

Given all of the considerations we have offered regarding this internship proposal, we would also like to offer an outline of the various players that would be involved in this internship. At the present

moment, we cannot anticipate the exact number of individuals who will be involved with this project, yet we have attached an organizational chart (Table 1) of the potential chains of command that we anticipate will be necessary to ensure that this program runs smoothly. As this proposal is evaluated, we invite the town to place staff along the chart as necessary.

In addition to our organizational chart, we would like to take the time to identify key individuals and departments that we believe will be instrumental. These individuals may be placed along the organizational chart or conduct an outside capacity. Here we present our partnerships thus far. See Table 1 for a chart of these important actors.

In the town of Randolph, we have identified a key point of contact for this project as Michelle Tyler, Town Planner. She was the initiator of this MetroBridge partnership, and she has graciously supported this undertaking. We have also left space on the organizational chart for potential additional support staff from Town Hall. Staff members who are interested and able to support this project will be welcome to fill capacities identified by the organizational chart and also the discussions of Town Hall.

An additional supporter within Randolph is Principal Conard at Randolph High School. Although we do not intend for him to serve in a direct supervisory role, we hope that he is able to use his relationships with students to encourage them to apply to the internship. Additionally, we hope to receive feedback from him and the other school administrators to identify ways in which the internship could better be improved to serve the needs of the town in terms of the families that utilize the services of the high school. Should any school administrators express an interest in supporting the internship in a more logistical capacity, they can be integrated into the organizational chart.

On the Boston University side of this project, the key point of contact will be Emily Robbins, Program Manager of MetroBridge. She has also expressed her investment in the success of this project. However, we hope to use the MetroBridge resources merely as a starting point for this project, as we plan for the project to eventually be moved into a different BU department. With that consideration, MetroBridge has already made contact with the following departments: the Wheelock College of Education and Human Development, the Community Service Center, and the Student Activities Office. We explored in earlier sections the benefits that this program could have to BU students, and these offices would be the mechanism through which the students are able to engage. These three departments each have experience with some form of educational or mentorship program, and our new initiative directed at high school students could be a valuable addition to their repertoire of activities. The departments also have more of the resources and expertise necessary to make this a successful undertaking. Finally, a departmental home would be a crucial factor in the sustainability of this project, as it will have a permanent destination on BU's campus. At the time of this publication, Christine Leider of Wheelock College had responded to our correspondence that she would be interested in further conversations at the conclusion of the fall semester. We intend to keep the lines of communication open with all three offices in the meantime. The final key player in this development process will be the student mentors, so we would like to explore some of the potential requirements for their participation. This is a list of suggestions that can be adapted at the discretion of the future departmental directors of this program.

## **BU Student Expectations**

Our recommended expectations for the Boston University student mentor participants are as follows. The primary form of communication between them and their mentees will be through a weekly video



or voice call. This meeting will serve as a form of accountability for the interns, wherein they can report the progress of the week and make plans for the week ahead. Additionally, this long-distance meeting will serve as a personal check-in. The mentors and mentees could discuss professional or personal challenges that may have come up for the intern. In addition to these benefits, these meetings may also serve a useful logistical function during the early days of this program. If weekly meetings with their Town Hall supervisor is not possible, the mentors can serve in this capacity.

Ideally, the mentors will also be required to be available via their choice of either email or text message with a reasonable response time (such as 24 hours) to respond to questions or other inquiries from their mentees. Furthermore, the mentors will be expected to visit their mentee in Randolph at least twice per semester to gain the benefits of face-to-face conversations. This could be arranged through the department via commuter rail or other determined transportation methods.

In conclusion, the Boston University mentors will work to advise their assigned intern through their professional challenges and college application processes. They will be an asset to the program by creating a connection between Boston University and the Town of Randolph, as well as the benefits we have discussed previously.

## Measuring Success

Moving forward, measuring success is essential for the quality and growth of the program. In order to do so, we propose a system that would quantify and evaluate the number of complaints from residents. Specifically, this system would track the number of times that a resident calls or visits town hall and says that they did not know a specific alert was sent out. Success would rely on a decrease in the number of resident complaints. Another way to evaluate success would be through the library of resources. Here, town hall would evaluate the major communication problems that Randolph currently faces (i.e., road closures, winter storms, election date notices) and compile a library of resources that would be ready for students to edit and distribute. Finally, we suggest the use of performance evaluations for BU and high school students. This would ask the BU mentor to evaluate the work of the high school intern; similarly, the high school intern would be asked to evaluate the work of the BU mentor. Another survey would ask interns and mentors to evaluate the infrastructure of the program.

## Opportunities and Challenges

Potential opportunities for success and growth are promising. In addition to the possibility of students from both BU and the high school to form life-long friendships/mentorships, this internship has the ability to introduce students to new careers and passions. Whether this includes public health, education, political science, or police work, both BU students and high school students will be pushed outside of their comfort zones. Additionally, this internship would be beneficial for the reputation of Randolph high-school in partnering with Boston University; this would be illustrated in the name/advertisement of the program, attendance at the high school's college fair; and through student connectedness. Students would also get exposure to town politics; ideally, the town would see more registrations to vote and more young voters attend town elections. In a perfect world, the internship would partner with more universities around Massachusetts and be replicated in other high schools in the state.

Despite the great potential for success, the Randolph-BU internship may encounter barriers moving forward. Possible barriers may include a lack of interest from high school students and/or BU students; finding a sustainable partner at BU; convincing people of sustainability; ensuring student commitment and sustaining it over time; transportation for BU students to the town of Randolph; and the amount of resources available at town hall for students to engage in creative work (i.e., Adobe products, cameras, tripods, computers, printer ink, work space). However, if the town of Randolph is able to recruit Randolph High School as a main champion, we believe that many of these barriers can be removed. For example, the resources provided by the high school such as computers, printers, and work space would be helpful.

## Next Steps

Considering the various aspects of our proposal, we would like to offer recommendations on the immediate next steps that need to be taken to create this internship. Additionally, we offer an outline of the next year and tasks that need to be accomplished.

Immediately, the home of the partnership with Boston University needs to be finalized. Finding a departmental base for the BU side of the operation is crucial to sustainability. Currently, emails have been sent to the Wheelock College of Education and Human Development, the Student Activities Office, and the Community Service Center. We believe that these three offices may have the largest potential interest in investing in this program. As of December 2019, a representative of Wheelock College has responded that she would like to discuss this further, and the other departments have yet to respond.

After the establishment of a BU partner, feedback on this proposal will need to be acquired from the town-level stakeholders. These stakeholders will include staff of the Town Hall that will be affiliated with the internship, as well as any willing administrators from Randolph High School. These affiliates will evaluate if any changes need to occur with this proposal. Additionally, specific people will need to be assigned to the outline of responsibility in our organizational chart. Finally, those at the town level will need to evaluate the implementation of this proposal and if it is something that would be feasible in the town.

The next step will be evaluating interest at the student level. We recommend a preliminary interest survey be sent to the high school students to gauge unofficial interest. Similarly, Town Hall will then need to evaluate capacity for the first year. Although aspirations for this program may be high, it will be important to start with a reasonable sized group of interns to ensure that all of the appropriate support structures are in place. Based on those assigned to the organizational chart, the town will need to determine how many interns would be manageable for the first year of the program.

Our next recommendation is to create an evaluative reporting system to analyze the frequency and type of incidents that would require intern intervention. This could be a simple Excel sheet or a more sophisticated software, but we believe that it would be beneficial to begin tracking incidents and events beginning in January 2020 so that there is a general understanding of the types of tasks interns may be asked to assist on. This could also assist in the determination of working hours for the interns, and how many hours may be necessary for them to work each week. This program would also be beneficial because the interns can then use the same tracking system to record their responses to different problems. This could provide a data set that the interns continue to update and could help the town see places where they may need additional intern assistance, and to help the interns evaluate the impact of their work.

## Timeline

After these initial steps have been undertaken, it is important to look forward to the next few months' worth of investment into this project. We have broken our recommendations into three-month periods. The first three-month period will span from January to March 2020. By the end of this period we have several goals we hope to accomplish as outlined below:

- Review this proposal and make any necessary edits to the plans presented.
- Finalize the partnership between Boston University and Randolph and ensure that this program has a home at BU.
- Create an application and send it to the students- preferably rising seniors as they begin preparing their class schedules for Fall 2020.
  
- Begin considering physical space at town hall where the interns could work.
- Decide what tools they have access to- computers, computer software/programs, filming equipment, Adobe products, printing limits, email addresses, etc.
- Establish an approval process for all intern ideas- to whom must they send their ideas and in what format.
- Evaluate times of year that will be the busiest and which problems interns may see during certain times of year. This, however, may be difficult and this data may not exist until the internship program has already been in existence for a year.
- Determine how many hours per week the interns will work.

The next phase will be from April to June 2020, concluding six months after the initial steps began. These steps will be:

- Email decisions to incoming interns welcoming them to the team.
- Finalize physical space and ensure that it has necessary desk space and capacity.
- Determine what training needs to happen for the interns to be prepared.
- Begin recruiting Boston University student mentors in partnership with the BU office that eventually takes on this project.
- Finalize program for BU participants
  - Facilitating office completes the BU end- editing the proposal to match their goals, creating a structure for the mentorship aspect, possibly designing a syllabus, etc.

Our next goal post will be nine months in the future, spanning from July to September 2020, following these steps:

- Finalize BU student participants and assign them to an intern.
- Welcome and train interns. Ideally they will begin working in September at the same time as they return to classes.

Finally, we have outlined to the conclusion of the first year, which will be over the time frame of August to December 2020.

- Evaluate progress made thus far by the interns.
- Begin to make adjustments for the next class of interns. Determine any structural changes that will need to occur.
- Determine if new interns will be hired to grow the team each semester or each year.
  - Recruit current interns to help with advertising and hiring process.

Through this timeline we have tried to factor in the various processes that will help to make this program viable throughout its first year, as well as set it up for success and sustainability in the years to come.

## Conclusion

The internship program with Boston University and Randolph High School with Town of Randolph is the final blueprint we propose as a possible solution to solve the problem that Randolph face with their multilingual residents. We hope that this internship program reach its goal within the proposed time frame and prove its effectiveness, accordingly help boost communication within Randolph community and bring all multilingual residents together as one town, and go beyond to benefit both high schoolers and university students by providing a rich environment for exploring interests in a real society and developing professional abilities. We expect many interested student interns and mentors to help realize this proposal.

# Appendix

Table 1 Organizational Chart

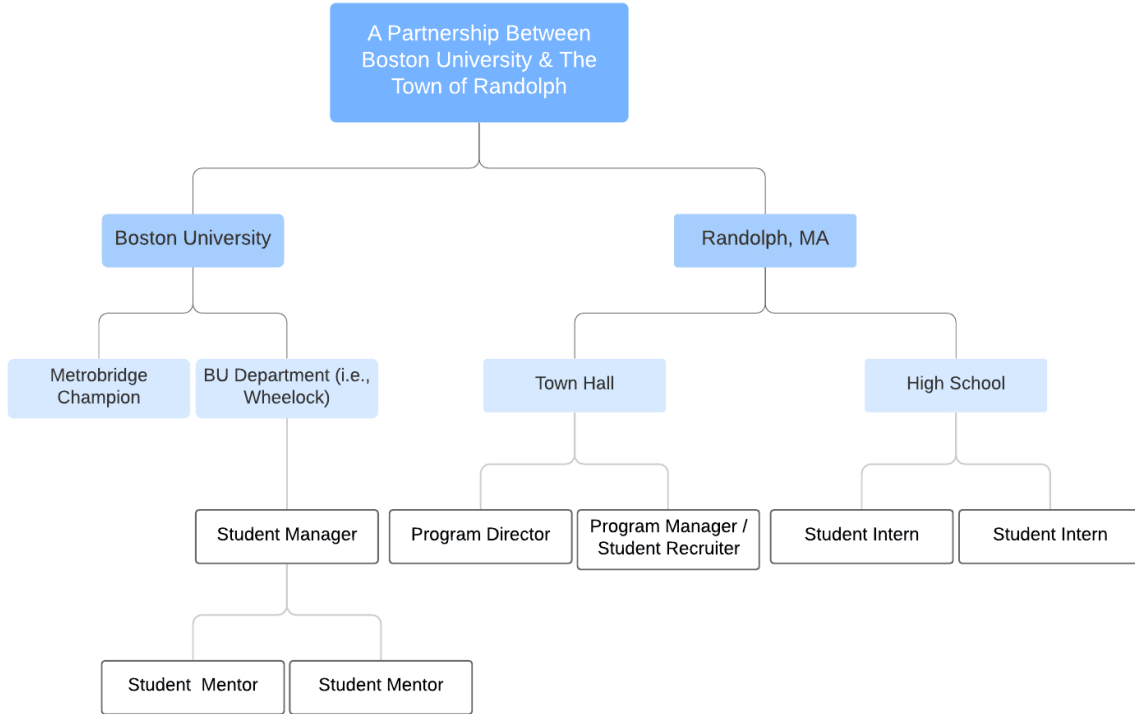


Table 2 *Mock Flyer*



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